

Police vol 14

THOUGHTS

ON THE

PRESENT STATE

OF

THE PRISONS OF THIS COUNTRY.

EXEMPLIFIED

BY A PLAN,

ADAPTED

TO THE OBJECTS OF SUCH CONSIDERATION.

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THOUGHTS,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

IN reflecting on the present state of the several prisons of this country, whether for the reception of felons and others, or for debtors, I am inclined to believe they are productive of those crimes that punishment was intended to reform; and the cause appears in many instances, from too close a connection with each other; from whence the alarming influence of bad example, which, in prisons, is spontaneously exhibited from the most abandoned of all classes.

Being

Being requested by some friends in my professional department, as an architect, to turn my thoughts to the forming a plan to prevent the many evils arising from the present mode of imprisonment, and the buildings constructed for that purpose (and I glory in the opportunity which has humanity and good policy for its basis) many thoughts were naturally incorporated with my architectural ideas, and therefore to communicate my sentiments the more clearly, I was of course led,

First, To consider the general state and management of the several prisons now in being.

Secondly, What effects arise from such constructed buildings and management.

And Thirdly, To propose my plan for reformation; and to point out, at the same time, those observations that occurred independent of what could be exhibited by the plan.

In

In viewing the state of the prisons, and the common practices therein, the extent of this enquiry, will not permit my considering it in a particular, but a general point of view.

Prisons are comprehended under the titles of county or town gaols, bridewells and houses of correction; and are either applied as temporary places for safe custody, or permanent expedients of reformation.

But in whatever light they are considered, they will be found generally, with very few exceptions, to be improperly built; composed but of few rooms, them large, and intended to crowd therein as many prisoners as they will hold, whether healthy, sick or infirm. The tap rooms are equally large, upon the same idea, and few, very few, have hospitals, or receptacles for the sick; if there are any places of divine worship, they are calculated to receive the crowd promiscuously, and as places of retreat only from
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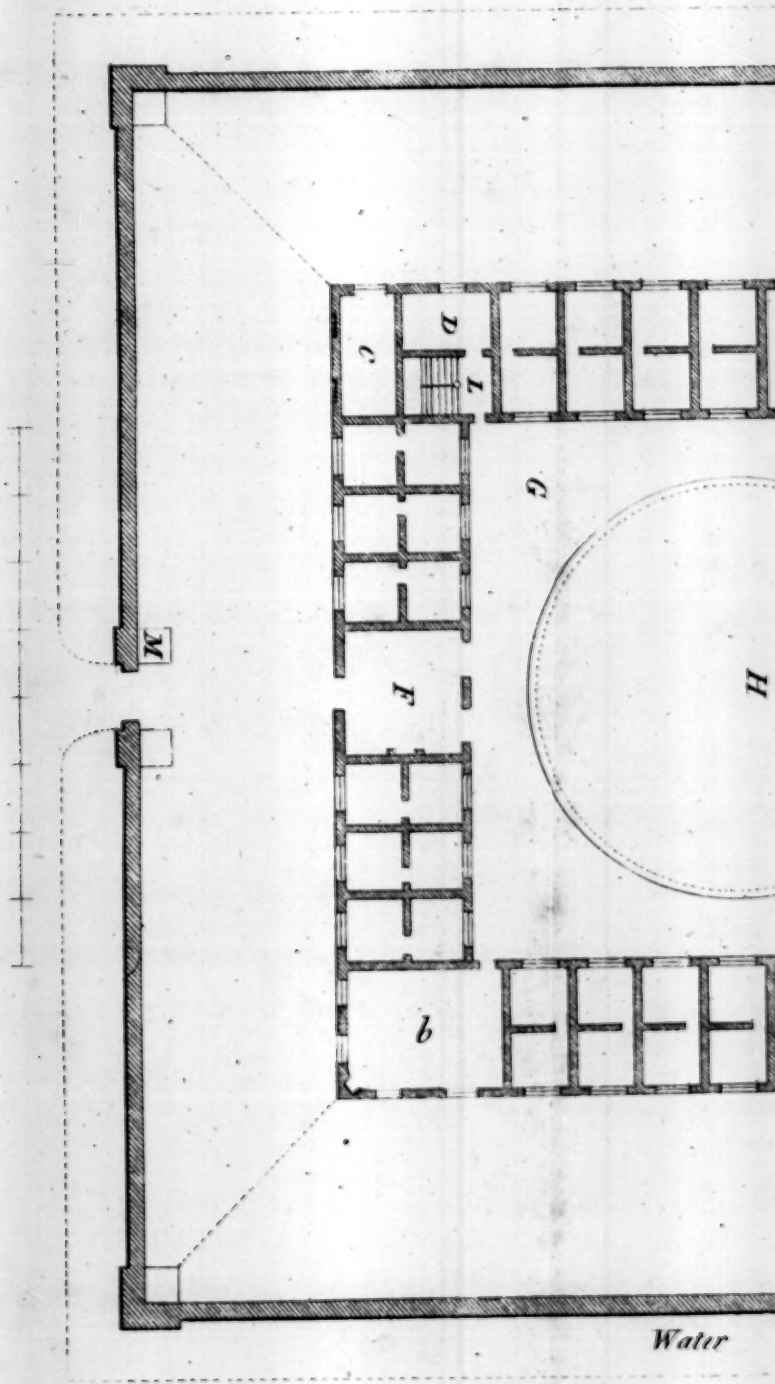
the tap; where the clergyman becomes exposed to the insolence and intoxication of the several members of these dreadful regions, and where the effect of his doctrine is frustrated by the situation in which his auditors receive it.

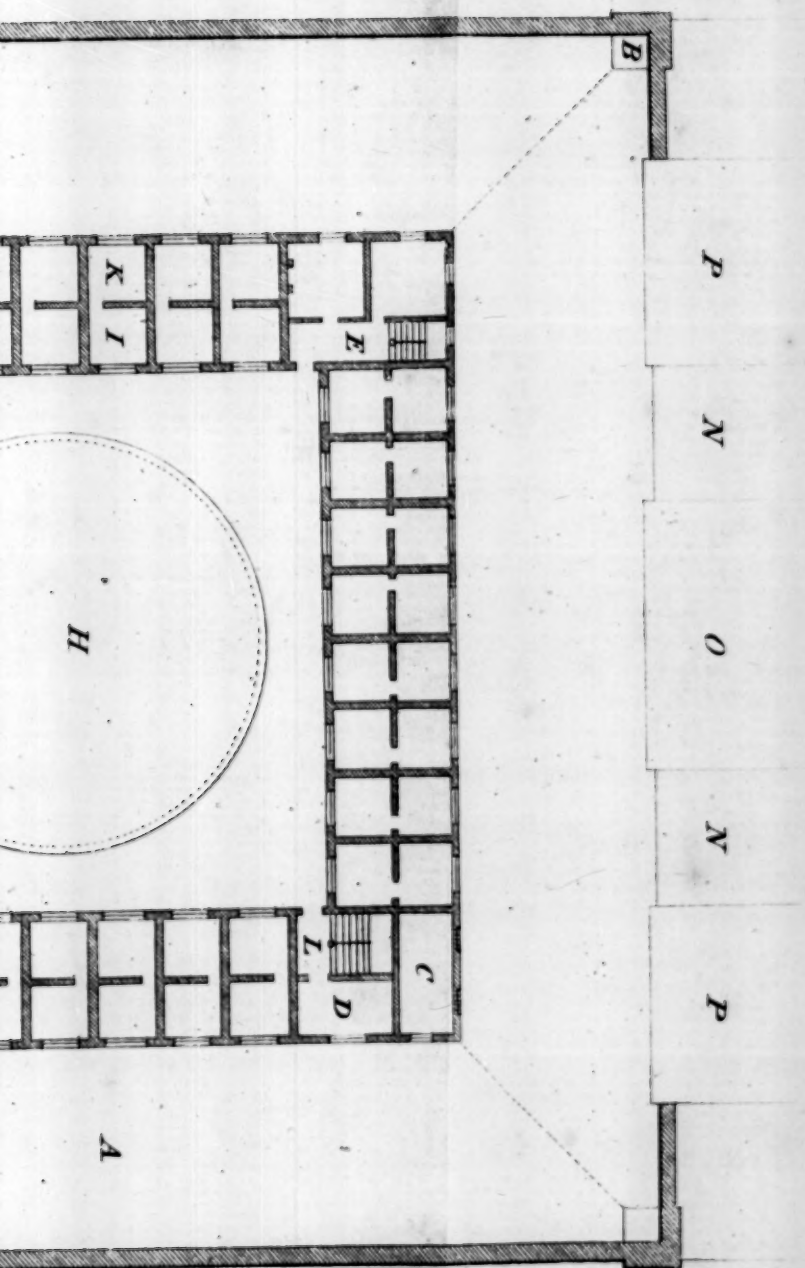
In many prisons there is an absolute want of water, and in almost all, from the size and contracted number of the apertures, a want of air, with bad or scarcely any drains, and few ventilators of either kind; either a total want of warmth, or fire recesses dangerously or improperly placed.

I believe this account not exaggerated in respect to the buildings; nor the following, respecting the common practices therein.

Scanty or improper food, great want of proper bedding, and of rayment to the naked; no provision for work, or if there be, injudiciously enforced, and for useless purposes, neither producing the effect of more comfort in the prisons,

or





or profit to the public ; on whom so considerable a burthen is lain for their support.

Gaol distemper and small pox, engendered by numbers, filth and excess, are extended to the whole prison, destroying the constitution, and impregnating the air with poisonous effects.

Debtors, felons, those only guilty of small crimes, women, and youth, are blended together ; listening to, and encouraging each other in every act of wretchedness and vice. Nor can I stop here ; the extortion of keepers and servants, under the many cant names made use of, the suffering them to keep the tap, and farm the allowance of food in the prison, only increase the general disorder ; and to which if the gaming practised therein be added, it will readily be perceived, that these receptacles are indeed promoters only of profligacy and disease.

From hence appear to be produced distempers of the most malignant nature, which have often

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extended,

extended, and still oftner may extend their baneful influence to those who are the ministers of justice, and others perfectly innocent of their crimes, and who frequently become guiltless victims to such disorders.

Confederacies, insurrections, and escapes are equally to be dreaded, and have often happened (too lately indeed) in many instances for the peace and happiness of individuals.

Nor is the connection that is kept up with artful and designing men, less to be attended to; such as the lowest of attorneys, &c. and which often contribute to wrest from justice, persons, whose crimes call for exemplary punishment, and who, by such assistance, are again let loose to trouble and harass mankind. These harpies live on the unfortunate, and frequently by buoying up their hopes, at a great expence, deprive them and their wretched families of sustenance; and ultimately disappoint and disregard both their interests and persons.

Those

Those who are committed by the magistrates for smaller crimes, where either no bail can be procured, or where (consistent with law) the crimes do not admit of bail, are equally exposed to every evil produced in prison, and become connected with the greatest villains; and I may truly assert, under all the influence of bad example, come forth worse members of society. There are many among the number, whose crimes originate from trifling causes or who (after they are acquitted by one or other of the juries, are detained only for the non payment of fees) become corroded in iniquity, and whose practices destroy every latent principle of good, producing in these nurseries of crimes the very objects the laws meant to lessen.

Nor are the impositions of the inferior officers less to be complained of. Nature retorts at ill usage; and I see no reason why the unfortunate or even the guilty should be loaded with oppression, which the already miserable alone cannot fly from.

How far a plan adapted to prevent all these inconveniences, with the additional advantages resulting from industry in useful and well-applied labour, good air and cleanliness, may deserve the public attention, the author submits with great deference; happy if it only shews the outline of what more enlarged ideas may correct and bring to perfection.

A general DESCRIPTION of a BUILDING proposed

(see the plan annexed)

To be situated if possible detached from a city or town, near water, and upon an eminence, and elevated above the surface of the walk that environs the same, at least three feet; to be composed of as many stories, and to be of such extent, as the size of the county or district, and the probable number of prisoners may require. This plan, with four stories, will contain in number about 150 persons.

The walls that surround the area or walk to be thick and formed pyramidically, and at least
thirty

thirty feet high; the said area to be paved, and to have proper conveyances for water, as well as drains underneath (to prevent bad smells) out of the premises into a common sewer.

The several cells and areas in each story to be arched in brickwork, and to be about eight feet high. Water to be lain in to each respective cell with cocks from a reservoir above; also sinks and pipes for the immediate discharge of waste water; and flues in the walls, occasionally to warm the same, from one common furnace below, similar to the manner of heating hot-houses.

The whole building may be of brick or stone, according to the situation, and to be arched under the roof. The middle space, which is proposed to be but one story from bottom to the top, to be amply lighted from Palladian windows, or a dome above, with a ventilator, or ventilators, in the ceiling of the same.

As

As for the elevation, with the decorations thereof, they must be submitted to the ingenuity of the architect employed; which, it is presumed, he will think necessary to be applicable to the subject.

It might not be amiss on the battlements or parapets of the building, to have small cannon placed for common defence, as well as a conspicuous alarm bell on the roof, with cords to the different parts of the building.

Whatever may be the necessary extent of the prison, it may be enlarged by adding more stories thereto; such a method being in itself cheaper than extending the building, as the roofs and foundations remain the same.

BASEMENT STORY,

Which must be sunk no lower below the surface, than the natural moisture or springs of the ground admit;

admit; it may contain hot and cold baths for the use of the prisoners; a tap room, and kitchen, of sufficient size for the extent of the building, which will differ according to circumstances; also cellars for coals, liquors, &c. and places for the punishment of the prisoners, and for sundry inferior purposes, and for making fires to heat the respective apartments.

N. B. The middle space need not make part of this story.

THE FIRST OR GROUND STORY.

A. A walk of thirty feet to environ the building, divided into four parts, which may be made use of by the sick, and the prisoners, with the consent of the keeper; but so that few be permitted at one time, and them divided into classes.

B. Watchmen at each angle (with fire arms).

C. Engine houses.

D.

- D. Water closets, open to the air, with iron
grates and ventilators.
- E. Keeper's house, which is to command the
avenues and be connected by doors with
the prison only.
- F. The hall (being the only entrance), wherein
is room for the necessary attendants.
- G. A passage of communication railed off from
the vestibule (in each story).
- H. The common vestibule, wherein divine
service is to be perform'd by the chaplain
in the center, so elevated that the prisoners
may attend the same from their respective
cells in each story, without coming out of
the same. This vestibule, at times, may
be applied to other purposes.
- I. Cells, with iron grates high enough to be
above the head.
- K.

K. Open areas adjoining, in which the prisoners may enjoy the benefit of air, by grated openings next the walks; in which open spaces their manual labour may be performed.

L. Stone staircases for the use of the prison, shut off by iron doors.

M. Guards at the entrance (the only one).

N. Wash-houses, brewhouses, and other offices.

O. An infirmary for the sick to be removed to, (on arches).

P. Store-houses, or ware-houses, (as many stories as are necessary) for the work executed in the prison.

Q. Occasional ward on each story either for imprisonment or work.

THE SECOND, THIRD OR FOURTH PRISON STORIES,

Which may be augmented according to
the necessary extent of the prison,

To be the same as the several parts already
described on the ground story, except over the
engine houses are to be apartments for the keep-
er's servants, and additional cells over the hall.

IN THE UPPER STORY.

The same plan to be observed; but the cells
may be made double the size, for those who can
afford it, or whose rank entitle them to larger
apartments, upon paying for such extra ad-
vantage.

In designing such a building, the author con-
ceives more real advantages would result from
this size, than if more extended; for should
that, in any situation, be necessary, two or more
buildings

buildings of the like kind would prevent many inconveniences resulting from a larger fabric, and more inhabitants. But as every situation will require some alterations to be attended to, and this work is only intended to convey general ideas, by application to the author, or any other architect, particular objects may be reconciled on these principles, as well as the elevation and estimates be adapted thereto.

To the foregoing observations on the plan, it may be necessary to add, the following political regulations, with such others as local circumstance may require.

That the keepers and other attendants be not permitted directly or indirectly, on pain of removal or pecuniary punishments, to extort, demand, or require from any of the prisoners any kind of fee or gratuity whatever.

That the general regulations, as well as prices of every article within the prison, be painted and fixed up in the public hall.

That the salaries of the several officers be fully sufficient to keep them above the necessity of improper measures, and in particular that they have nothing to do with the sale of the liquor, or farming the food allowed in the prison.

That no visits be paid to the prisoners without the express consent of the head keeper; that such visits be paid only at the grate of each respective apartment; that nothing in any degree be delivered to the prisoners without it has undergone his immediate inspection; that no liquor be supplied, but with his consent both as to quantity and quality.

That every cell be scraped and cleaned effectually upon the departure of the prisoner, before another enter therein.

That the person keeping the tap room in the basement story have no manner of connection with the prisoners, but be paid upon the delivery of his liquor by the keeper's servants.

That

That the chaplain, in his appointment, be directed to assist and visit separately the several prisoners, as well as perform his public duty.

That committees from among the magistrates be appointed to survey and inspect the safety and regulations of the prisons, the health, rayment, food, &c. of the prisoners; and to hear the complaints against the keepers and attendants.

That their work be of that nature, as not only to be useful to the public, but productive of profit, whereby the expences of the prison may be lessened.

Upon the whole, in forming such a plan, great respect and attention has been had to keep each prisoner unconnected with each other, not only on different stories, and in separate classes, but even out of the possibility of hearing, speaking or forming such connection; in which attempt,

tempt, their being secluded from company may produce those sober thoughts so necessary in a work of reformation.

The means of constant and useful employment; and that in good air, and with every convenience for cleanliness, will be considered equally necessary in this state of durance.

Together with opportunities of attending divine service from their separate apartment, without removal; the means by the disposition of the plan of separating the sexes, and classing the prisoners according to the malignity of their crimes, and their rank and situation in life; and in particular separating the youthful offenders from the rest; with occasional opportunities of fresh air and exercise according to certain regulations.

In which plan, the security of the prison and the prisoners is attended to, by a judicious arrangement of the apartments, by engines and fire arms, and by the proper distribution of the
houses

houses and apartments of the keepers, and their attendants, with watchmen, and other proper officers.

Nor are the common comforts of life forgot, (if comforts in such situations may be said to exist), by a temporary means of warming the several apartments without the hazard of fire ; by fresh water laid in, and by a proper discharge of the foul ; by ventilators where necessary ; by walks, to be used occasionally according to the discretion of the superintendant, for the invalids and others ; a proper supply of liquor and food, by the favour of their friends or their money, without that excess resulting from common tap rooms, or the usual incitements to debauchery in every way ; the opportunity of attending divine service, freed from those evils that have been complained of, arising from intoxication.

I trust that this plan will be found consistent with what I proposed, viz. the preventing bodily disorders, confederacies, escapes, insurrections, excesses, quarrels, improper connections

tions, and debaucheries of every kind; and upon the whole produce what undoubtedly is the object of imprisonment, reformation and safe custody *.

Perhaps a similar plan upon a more extensive scale might be apposite to other purposes, as hospitals, work-houses, &c. and also to the convicts now placed on the river Thames, under the title of a Penitentiary house; especially if useful labour could be adopted; the salutary effects of which would appear conspicuous upon comparison, and point out such a plan as the result of good policy and humanity.

* Since this pamphlet was wrote, and not before, the author has seen a very valuable work, published some time since, by John Howard, Esq; F. R. S. had he seen it sooner, he perhaps had not ventured to exhibit this feeble attempt on the same subject to the public; but as some thoughts are contained herein not to be found there, and as the plan materially differs, he flatters himself, the publication will not be ill timed; especially, as the price will put it within the power of many to peruse, who otherwise would remain unacquainted with the subject. He is happy to find his thoughts in many instances to coincide with so respectable an author.

F I N I S.

